

In the Claims:

Please amend claims 1-6, 9, 11, 13-15 and 17-19 as follows:

Sub H4 1. (Amended) [Tampon, especially] A tampon for feminine hygiene, formed from an approximately cylindrical blank which is shaped by (winding up a portion of a length of tape-shaped nonwoven material, [and the] wherein a circumferential surface of [which] the blank is pressed radially relative to [the] a longitudinal mid-axis of the blank over an even number (of (at least 6 portions mutually adjacent in the circumferential surface [direction] of the [winding] blank, [characterized in that only] the resulting tampon comprising narrow strip-shaped portions of the circumferential surface [of the winding blank, which are] arranged at equal angular distances from one another[, are] that have been pressed to produce a preform which[, as seen in cross-section, consists of a central] comprises an approximately circular fibre core [(16)] of high compression and buckling strength and [of] longitudinal ribs [(17)] of softer fibre structure and with a coarser capillary structure which extend radially [outwards] outwardly from the fibre core and which are separated from one another by outwardly open longitudinal grooves [(18), and in that, accordingly,] whereby only the [soft] longitudinal ribs [of the preform (15)] have been exposed to a low uniform pressure, radial relative to [the] a longitudinal mid-axis of the preform, in such a way that [the] outer ends of the longitudinal ribs [form] exhibit a soft [essentially smoothly cylindrical] smooth surface [of smaller diameter], with the

coarser capillary structure corresponding to the final form of the tampon being maintained [(10)].

23 (cont.)
2. (Amended) Tampon according to Claim 1, wherein the blank [of which is produced from] comprises a needled nonwoven tape consisting of 100% rayon fibre, [characterized in that] wherein the tampon, [with] has a weight of 2.4 g without the recovery tape, and has a specific absorption capacity of 4.8 ml/g at an absorption rate of 1.9 ml/s.

3. (Amended) Tampon according to Claim 2, [characterized in that] wherein the absorption capacity [of the tampon amounts to] is about 11.3 ml at a static counterpressure of 20 mbars.

4. (Amended) Tampon according to [Claims 1 to 3, characterized in that,] Claim 2, wherein at a pulsating counterpressure of 20 to 110 mbars, the absorption capacity of the tampon [amounts to] is about 8.0 ml and the specific absorption capacity [to] is about 3.4 ml/g.

Sub 13
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5. (Amended) Tampon according to [one of Claims 1 to 4, characterized in that] Claim 2 wherein the diameter of the tampon[, in its final form, amounts to] is between 13 and 15 mm, the ~~central~~-fibre core having a diameter of 4 to 8 mm.

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(cont.)

6. (Amended) Process for producing [the] a tampon
[according to Claims 1 to 5,] in which an essentially cylindrical
blank is shaped by the steps of: winding up a portion of length
of tape-shaped nonwoven material[, the] ; radially pressing a
circumferential surface of [which is pressed radially] the blank
relative to [the] a longitudinal mid-axis of the blank over an
even number of at least six portions mutually adjacent in the
circumferential [direction] surface of the [winding] blank,
[characterized in that] whereby only narrow strip-shaped portions
of the circumferential surface of the [winding] blank, which are
arranged at equal angular distances from one another, are pressed
to produce a preform which, [as seen] in cross-section, consists
of a central approximately circular fibre core of high
compression and buckling strength and of longitudinal ribs of a
softer fibre structure with a coarser capillary structure which
extend radially outwards from the fibre core and which are
separated from one another by outwardly open longitudinal
grooves, [and in that, accordingly,] whereby only the [soft]
longitudinal ribs [of the preform] are exposed to a low uniform
pressure, radial relative to [the] a longitudinal mid-axis of the
preform, until the outer ends of the longitudinal ribs have
formed a soft essentially [smoothly cylindrical] smooth surface
[of smaller diameter,] with the coarser capillary structure
corresponding to the final form of the tampon being maintained.

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9. (Amended) Apparatus for producing [the] a tampon
[according to one of Claims 1 to 8 and for carrying out the
process according to one of Claims 6 to 8, consisting of]
comprising: two groups of [altogether] at least six press dies
arranged in a plane perpendicular to [the] a press axis[, the]; a
first group of press dies forming press segments[, of which the]
comprising side flanks[,] in [the closing] a closed position of
the press segments, that form respectively for each of [the press
dies of the] a second group of press dies, guide surfaces which
are designed as sliding plates, wherein in [the] a closed state
[the] end faces of the press dies [forming] form an essentially
cylindrical pressing face, [characterized in that] whereby the
press segments [(22)] and the sliding plates [(24)] form a
preforming press for [the] pressing [of] a preform [(15)], and
press cutters [(27)] projecting from the end faces [(25, 26)] of
the press segments [(22)] and of the sliding plates [(24), and
in] such that the preforming press is followed by a stationary
conical forming die [(29) which is] arranged coaxially relative
to the press axis, [and] the die having an entry orifice [(30)]
[of] which is calculated to match the diameter of [the] an
orifice of the preforming press, when its press dies [(22, 24)]
are in the closed state, and [the] an exit orifice [(32) of which
is] calculated to match the final cross section of the finished
tampon (10).

D5 11. (Amended) Apparatus according to [Claims 9 or] Claim 10, [characterized in that] wherein all the press cutters [(27)] have the same pressing faces [(28)].

D6 13. (Amended) Apparatus according to [Claims 9 or] Claim 10, [characterized in that] wherein the press cutters [(27)] have pressing faces [(28)] of differing form.

Sub E14 14. (Amended) Apparatus according to [one of Claims 9 to] Claim 13, [characterized in that] wherein the length and width of the press cutters [(27)], [radial] radially relative to the press axis [(21)], [amounts to] are about 10 and 2 mm respectively.

15. (Amended) Apparatus according to [one of Claims 9 to] Claim 14, [characterized in that,] wherein when the press is in the closed state, the pressing faces [(28)] of the press cutters [(26)] assume a clear distance [of] from 2 to 4 mm from the press axis [(21)].

Sub E16 17. (Amended) Apparatus according to [one of Claims 9 to] Claim 16, [characterized in that] wherein all the press dies [(22, 24)] are first closable concentrically relative to the press axis [(21)] to approximately the diameter of the winding blank [(11),] and subsequently the press segments [(22)] of the first group of press dies are simultaneously movable concentrically into the closing position, and thereafter the

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sliding plates [(24)] of the second group of press dies are movable to the final dimension of the preform [(15)].

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(Cont.)
18. (Amended) Apparatus according to [one of Claims 9 to] Claim 16, [characterized in that] wherein the press segments [(22)] and the sliding plates [(24)] are simultaneously movable concentrically relative to the press axis [(21)] into [the closing] a closed position which corresponds to the final dimension of the preform [(15)].

19. (Amended) Apparatus according to [one of Claims 9 to] Claim 18, [characterized in that, arranged on the input side of the preforming press, there is] further comprising a ram [(33)] arranged on the input side of the preforming press which is movable axially [to and fro] for ejecting [the] a preform [(15)] from the preforming press and for pushing [the] a preform through the conical forming die [(29)].

Please add new claim 20 as follows:

Sub 19
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--20. A tampon formed by compressing selected areas of a blank, the tampon comprising:

a compressed, approximately circular fibre core; and
at least six longitudinal ribs extending from the core that are less compressed relative to the core.--